

I CLAIM:

1. A nozzle guard for an ink jet printer printhead with an array of nozzles and respective colorant ejection means for ejecting colorant onto a substrate to be printed,
5 wherein the nozzle guard is adapted to be positioned on the printhead to inhibit damaging contact with the exterior of the array of nozzles.
2. A nozzle guard according to Claim 1 including a shield covering the exterior of the nozzles wherein the shield has an array of passages in registration with the array of nozzles so as not to impede the normal trajectory of the colorant ejected
10 from each nozzle.
3. A nozzle guard according to Claim 2 wherein the shield is formed from silicon.
4. A nozzle guard according to Claim 2 further including fluid inlet openings for directing fluid through the passages, to inhibit the build up of foreign particles on
15 the nozzle array.
5. A nozzle guard according to Claim 2 further including a support means for supporting the nozzle shield on the printhead.
6. A nozzle guard according to Claim 5 wherein the support means is integrally formed with the shield, the support means including a pair of spaced support
20 elements, one being arranged at each end of the nozzle shield.

7. A nozzle guard according to Claim 6 wherein the fluid inlet openings are arranged in one of the support elements.

8. A nozzle guard according to Claim 2 wherein the fluid inlet openings are arranged in the support element remote from a bond pad of the nozzle array.

5 9. A printhead for an ink jet printer, the printhead including:
an array of nozzles and respective colorant ejection means for ejecting colorant onto a media substrate to be printed; and,
a nozzle guard positioned to inhibit damaging contact with the exterior of the array of nozzles.

10 10. A printhead according to Claim 9 wherein the nozzle guard has a shield covering the exterior of the nozzles wherein the shield has an array of passages in registration with the array of nozzles so as not to impede the normal trajectory of the colorant ejected from each nozzle.

15 11. A printhead according to Claim 10 wherein the shield is formed from silicon.

12. A printhead according to Claim 11 wherein the nozzle guard includes fluid inlet openings for directing fluid through the passages, to inhibit the build up of foreign particles on the nozzle array.

20 13. A printhead according to Claim 10 wherein the nozzle guard has a support means for supporting the nozzle shield on the printhead.

14. A printhead according to Claim 13 wherein the support means is integrally formed with the shield, the support means comprising a pair of spaced support elements one being arranged at each end of the nozzle shield.

15. A printhead according to Claim 14 wherein the fluid inlet openings are
5 arranged in one of the support elements.

16. A printhead according to Claim 10 wherein the fluid inlet openings are arranged in the support element remote from a bond pad of the nozzle array.

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